

# International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Usability Testing of IDRC's Corporate Site  
March 2005

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# I. Introduction

This chapter outlines the background, research objectives and approach, as well as the respondent profile and research limitations.

# Background

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is a public corporation that assists developing countries in meeting social, economic and environmental challenges through multidisciplinary research to create long term solutions.

IDRC currently maintains a Web site, [www.idrc.ca](http://www.idrc.ca) which plays an important role in raising awareness of the organization and in facilitating communication among members and stakeholders. The site offers general information about the IDRC and its operations, including news and highlights of current activities. It also provides access to information and activities of international research communities that receive IDRC research funding and / or assistance. The IDRC site is used primarily by members of the research communities themselves, academics, federal government employees and managers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

In May 2003, IDRC completed usability testing of its site to test key usability parameters: structure and organization of content, functionality, ease of navigation, nomenclature and design and graphics. Following the testing, IDRC made adjustments to the site and launched a new version. More recently, IDRC wished to test the usability of the new IDRC corporate site.

# Research Objectives

Key objectives established for this research included:

- Evaluate the current version of the IDRC corporate site in terms of the overall quality of visitor experience offered.
- Evaluate and seek ways to improve the site based on the following elements:
  - Identify whether the purpose of the site was clear;
  - Assess satisfaction with the content and look and feel of the site;
  - Obtain feedback on the intuitiveness of the navigation structure and ease of finding information on the site; and,
  - Assess the appropriateness of language and nomenclature on the site.

# Approach [1]

- A total of 8 one-on-one usability interviews with potential site users were conducted March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 2005.
- Interview participants were recruited from within 3 key audiences:
  - Academic community (e.g. professors, graduate students);
  - Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and;
  - Federal government employees or managers from relevant departments.
- Interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide developed by Phase 5 and the project authority.
- The following page outlines the typical flow of the interviews.

# Approach [2]

All interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide with the following discussion flow:

1. **User modeling.** Following a brief introduction, participants were asked to discuss their use of the Internet to search for information being conducted in developing countries and to identify other sources used to find such information.
2. **Exercises.** Each respondent was asked to attempt two to three (depending on time) information retrieval exercises using the IDRC site to gauge the usability of the site. Participants were typically asked to complete at least one exercise related to finding corporate information (e.g. IDRC's job postings) and at least one exercise involving information beyond the corporate information (e.g. a specific IDRC book). Respondents were encouraged to "think-aloud" during the interview; that is, to express their thoughts, impressions and reactions as they completed the task at hand. This enabled us to record navigational patterns (paths followed, etc.), any problems they encountered, as well as their impressions (e.g. hesitation, endorsement or excitement). The following pages lists the exercises used in the interviews.
3. **Exercise review.** At the end of each exercise, the respondent's steps were retraced in order to assess the difficulty of completing the exercise and to discuss any particular stumbling blocks they seemed to encounter.
4. **Detailed Site Review.** At the end of the exercises, respondents reviewed IDRC site in more detail and were asked to discuss their overall impressions, key likes and dislikes and suggested improvements and modifications. Respondents were probed for specific feedback related to the homepage, overall look & feel, navigation, and content.
5. **Conclusion.** Participants were asked if they would personally use the site in the future and to list priority changes or enhancements that should be made to the site.

# Approach [3]

## Information Retrieval Exercises Used During the Interviews:

### **Pick at least one of the following three search scenarios:**

1. You are interested in working for IDRC, where would you go to find more information about IDRC's job postings?
2. How would you go about accessing IDRC's Annual Report?
3. How would you find the Expert Directory on this site?
4. The institution you represent is interested in obtaining research funding from IDRC, how would you go about finding the information to apply for this?

### **Pick at least one of the following three search scenarios:**

1. Where would you go to find information on research projects currently underway in Asia on biodiversity?
2. Where would you find the IDRC book entitled "Outcome Mapping"?
3. What research projects are currently underway in Africa related to peacebuilding?



# Respondent Profile

All participants expressed an interest in research that is being conducted in developing countries to find solutions to social, economic and/or environmental issues.

| Criteria                                    | Participants  |
|---|---|
| Previously used the IDRC site               | 5 – Yes<br>3 – Very rarely / a long time ago  |
| Demographics                                | Mix of Age and Gender   |
| Audience Group                              | 3 – NGOs<br>3 – Academic Community (1 professor, 2 graduate students)<br>2 – Government Employees |
| Weekly Internet Usage<br>(excluding e-mail) | 0 – less than 5 hours<br>3 – 5 to 10 hours<br>5 – more than 10 hours                              |
| Language                                    | 2 – French<br>6 – English   |

# Research Limitations

Readers are reminded that the results of qualitative research are not statistically representative. They therefore, cannot be generalized to a wider population and represent only the perceptions and opinions of a select group of individuals.

Notwithstanding this point, the qualitative feedback obtained through the study can provide useful direction and guidance for future refinements and enhancements to the IDRC web site.

## II. Key Findings

This chapter details the key findings that emerged from the analysis of the research.

# Information Sought and Sources Used

# Types of Information Sought

Participants were asked to describe the type of information they have recently sought that relates to research being conducted in developing countries. The following is a list of information mentioned:

- Research projects taking place in various countries
- Background information on various organizations and their projects and activities
- Canada's relations with other countries regarding international development
- Monetary assistance available from various organizations for research in developing countries.
- Political and economic information on various countries (e.g. Togo, Ghana, Uganda, Tanzania)
- General country information
- Articling research for university-level projects and courses
- Gender equity in developing countries

# Information Sources: Online

Online sources were by far the most common sources for relevant information. Web sites used by respondents included the following:

- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Various NGO sites
- Foreign Affairs Canada
- Various university sites
- United Nations
- Development gateway
- Foreign Affairs' sites of various developing countries
- IDRC
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Commissions on the Status of Women (CSW)

# Information Sources: Offline

Other than the Internet, participants used a variety of sources to search for information on IDRC funded research conducted in developing countries. The following sources were mentioned:

- Research articles
- Journals related to development
- Newsletters
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Various Consulates

# Experience Using the IDRC site

- All respondents had visited the IDRC site, although for some, it was very rarely or even a year or more ago.
- When asked how easy or difficult it was to locate information using the IDRC site, respondents typically mentioned that it wasn't overly difficult, but that it could have been easier. As one respondent commented, regarding previous navigation on the site,  
*"I found what I was looking for, but you need to know the tricks to be able to find the information easily."*
- A few respondents felt that the site was good for preliminary research and background information (e.g. about the organization, its projects etc.), but it didn't always seem to provide in-depth information related to a specific topic such as gender equity in Asia. This may be an issue regarding content, navigation or both on the site.



# Overall Impressions

# Overall Impressions [1]

- Overall, respondents' reactions to the IDRC site were positive. Respondents typically expressed that the site contained a wealth of interesting and useful information. The range and depth of information impressed respondents, often providing more than expected. Most information retrieval exercises were completed successfully by respondents, though some proved to be easier than others (see "Navigation" in the Reactions of Detailed Site Review section for more details).
- Less positive reactions tended to relate to the amount of text provided on the homepage and several second level pages. It was noted during the information retrieval exercises that most respondents did not take the time to read everything on the pages. Instead, they tended to focus on links and bullet points (focusing only on the first line or two) and not read full paragraphs until they got to the specific information that they were looking for.
- The purpose of the site seemed clear to most respondents; they tended to point to the banner and name of the organization on the site and rarely pointed to the mandate for clues on the purpose. Most respondents thought that the site was created to target the general public and researchers. The mandate presented on the homepage often went unnoticed, with respondents often commenting that it gets lost with all of the other text on the page. Once the mandate was pointed out, it was well received.

## Overall Impressions [2]

- The language used on the site was considered appropriate for the respondents (i.e. academics, government and NGO employees), while also being appropriate for anyone potentially interested in this type of information. This was generally acceptable to respondents, with some noting that it allowed the site to meet the needs of all audiences, including the general public.
- The organization of the site into three columns was rarely clear to respondents. Most did not understand the purpose of the right-hand column and usually only paid attention to it if they were experiencing difficulties while searching for information.
- While some liked the images and pictures displayed on the site, others seemed to think they were unnecessary. Respondents more heavily involved in research typically required quick and easy access to detailed information and tended to think the images were unnecessary.
- While the top links on the left menu bar were generally clear, the bottom site features listed with graphics (e.g. In\_Focus Dossier, Reports Magazine) were not. That is, respondents were rarely clear on what they expected to find in each section.

# Reactions from the Detailed Site Review

# Look and Feel [1]

- Overall, the look and feel of the site seemed appropriate to respondents. As one respondent commented,

*"I think its appropriate, it seems to reflect the mandate well."*

- At first glance, the homepage was generally well received, with some respondents commenting on its visual appeal. However, upon further inspection, respondents seemed to be overwhelmed by the amount of text and images on the page.
- There seemed to be too much text provided for each of the features listed on the right and especially in the centre of the page. Respondents usually either did not read the text or only read the first line or two before looking elsewhere on the page.
- Most respondents noticed that the content on the homepage was up-to-date and were pleased with this.

## Look and Feel [2]

- While some liked the images displayed on the homepage, others seemed to think they were unnecessary. The latter seemed most applicable to those more heavily involved in research, typically requiring quick and easy access to detailed information. In particular, the images shown on the right-hand column of the homepage were considered small and several respondents noted that they were so small that they couldn't really see what they represented or how they related to the content they accompany.
- The mandate seemed to get lost amongst all the other text in the homepage and it was suggested by many respondents that it should be displayed more predominantly on the page, using large, bolder font and perhaps a main heading. A suggestion was even made that the mandate be placed within the top main banner of the page (e.g. under the main heading "International Development Research Centre, Science for Humanity"). Sample comments by respondents related to this include the following:

*"It seems to flow into the next piece [of text] and your eye just skips over it."*

*"Your eye skips over it and goes immediately to the picture below."*

## Look and Feel [3]

- Most respondents thought that the site was created to target the general public and researchers. Impressions of the site for respondents who are considered more savvy in the international development field, was that it is a generic public site, suited more for the general public than for researchers and experts in the field. These respondents said that they do not require a fancy looking site with a lot of images and site features, etc. and that they are simply looking for a site that will easily get them to the information they need. On the other hand, the look of the site did not deter them. They still felt that it would contain useful information. Respondents who were less savvy in the field typically liked the look of the site.
- Organization of the site with the three-column approach was not clear. A few respondents suspected that the centre column provided the most recent news, which over time gets moved to the right column. Other respondents did not perceive any distinction between the centre and the right hand column. Some respondents offered that main headings of each column (e.g. "Current Features" for the centre, below the mandate) may be useful to help clarify the sections.



## Look and Feel [4]

- Empty spaces at the bottom of the homepage, especially in the left and right columns was noted and not liked by many respondents. As one respondent commented,

*"The blank space at the bottom almost makes the site look unfinished, like they are planning to put more content there."*



# Look and Feel [5]

The mandate largely went unnoticed.

Images in the right column were considered small and ineffective and the amount of text overwhelmed respondents.

The screenshot shows the IDRC website interface. On the left, a sidebar contains navigation links: HOME, ABOUT IDRC (Research Programs, Funding & Awards, IDRC Publications, Library, Pressroom, Evaluation), IDRC IN THE WORLD (with a world map), SUBSCRIBE (IDRC Bulletin), ONLINE BOOKS, REPORTS MAGAZINE, RESEARCH NETWORK, and Participate. The main content area features a header with the IDRC logo, a child's face, and the text 'The International Development Research Centre Science for Humanity'. Below the header, there are several news items with dates: 'IDRC is a Canadian public corporation...', 'Commission for Africa releases its final report...', 'Engendering Macroeconomic Policies', 'U.S. National Academies Select Partners...', and 'IDRC's goals and program directions 2005-2010'. On the right, there are two more news items: 'The 35th International Day of La Francophonie' and 'Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa'. Arrows from the text boxes point to the 'IDRC is a Canadian public corporation...' text and the 'Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa' image.

**IDRC** **CRDI**

The International Development Research Centre  
Science for Humanity

Español - Français

Canada

Search

HOME

ABOUT IDRC

- Research Programs
- Funding & Awards
- IDRC Publications
- Library
- Pressroom
- Evaluation

IDRC IN THE WORLD

SUBSCRIBE

IDRC Bulletin

ONLINE BOOKS

REPORTS MAGAZINE

RESEARCH NETWORK

Participate

guest (Read)(Ottawa) Login  
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IDRC is a Canadian public corporation that works in close collaboration with researchers from the developing world in their search for the means to build healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous societies.

**Commission for Africa releases its final report, mentions an IDRC project** 2005-03

On the occasion of the release of the Commission for Africa's final report, IDRC highlights some of its activities in the continent.

**Engendering Macroeconomic Policies** 2005-03-07

Gross National Product (GNP), investment, savings, balance of payments — these are the categories of analysis for macroeconomists. But is macroeconomic analysis gender-neutral? Many economists think so. In fact, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted unanimously by 189 countries at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 states, "Macroeconomic policies need rethinking and ..."

**U.S. National Academies Select Partners for Initiative to Develop African Science Academies in Partnership with IDRC** 2005-02-23

Academies in Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa chosen as focal points in program to bolster the African science community.

**IDRC's goals and program directions 2005-2010**

**The 35th International Day of La Francophonie – March 20th, 2005**

Celebrated each year, the International Day for La Francophonie commemorates the creation of the Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie (AIF) (formerly the Cultural and Technical Cooperation Agency) on March 20th, 1970. | [Read more...](#)

**Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa**

2005-02-22

"Africa will be empty of brains." That dire warning, from Dr Lalla Ben Barka of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), reflects the growing alarm over Africa's increasing exodus of ...

Canada

# Content [1]

- Overall, content on the site typically met or exceeded expectations even for respondents who had used the site before, but had not found the specific information they were looking for. This suggests an issue with navigation and the organization of content.
- Respondents were asked to consider each of the category links listed in the top left menu bar. For each, respondents were asked to describe the content they expected to find in the section. Following this, they reviewed the section to see if it met their expectations and to determine whether the content was personally relevant. The table on the following pages details the key findings for each category.

## Top Left Menu

- › About IDRC
- › Research Programs
- › Funding & Awards
- › IDRC Publications
- › Library
- › Pressroom
- › Evaluation

# Content [2]

## Content Expectations of Each Category

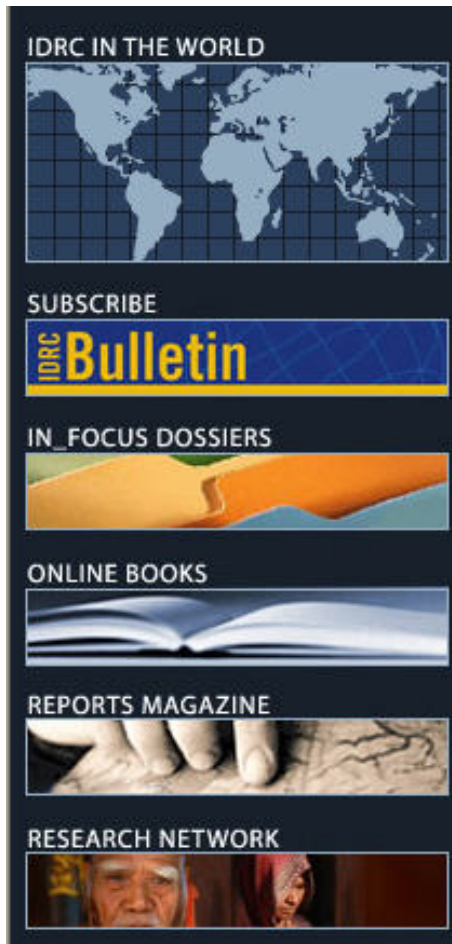
| Category Label              | Initial Expectations  | Comments   |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| <b>About IDRC</b>           | Respondents generally expected this category to provide background information about IDRC, including the structure, history, mandate, objectives, how it operates, etc. | The content in this section typically met respondents' expectations and was said to be useful. This section is also where the job postings can be found, and respondents who were asked to find this information during the information retrieval exercises did so with relative ease.   |
| <b>Research Programs</b>    | This category was expected to provide users with access to all the research programs and activities undertaken by IDRC.   | Expectations were largely met for this category, though some felt that the organization of topics could be improved and/or a search by topic feature (e.g. A-Z index) would be useful. The right column either was not noticed or the purpose was unclear to respondents.  |
| <b>Funding &amp; Awards</b> | Content related to funding and awards offered by IDRC, and in some cases for IDRC was commonly expected for this category.  | Content met and in some cases exceeded expectations for this category. Again, some respondents that noticed the right column questioned its purpose.   |
| <b>Publications</b>         | Respondents typically expected this category to contain links to various reports, articles, books published and/or endorsed by IDRC.                                    | Respondents felt that the content in this category met their expectations. Some thought that the organization of the content needed improvement (e.g. "Why place the Publication's Archive at the bottom of the list."). Some content links such as "IDRC Dossiers" were not clear to all. In addition, respondents tended not to notice that many of the centre links were duplicated in the left menu. |

# Content [3]

## Content Expectations of Each Category

| Category Label    | Initial Expectations  | Comments  |
|-------------------|---|---|
| <b>Library</b>    | This category was not clear to most respondents. Some expressed confusion as to the difference between this category and the "Publications" category. Some hesitantly thought that it would provide links to books and articles that contained subject matter related to IDRC, but were not published by IDRC. A few others thought that it might link to an outside source to search for publications. | By far, this category exceeded respondent's expectations. Respondents were typically surprised that it provided access to various online databases through IDRC. This was thought to be a useful tool that needed to be more clearly promoted on the site. One respondent suggested that simply changing the label to "IDRC Library" (which is the main heading given once you click on the "Library" link from the homepage) may help clarify this category. |
| <b>Pressroom</b>  | Access to current and archived media articles related to IDRC was expected for this category.   | This category met expectations in terms of the content listed on the left menu. However, it was not immediately clear to respondents that their expectations were being met because they usually focused on the centre column, which was organized in a confusing manner for many. The Expert Directory found in this category was not intuitive to those who attempted to find this information during the retrieval exercises.                              |
| <b>Evaluation</b> | Most respondents had no idea what this category contained. Those who guessed, thought that it might relate to evaluation of IDRC projects.  | Most respondents suggested that the label be changed to clarify the content (e.g. "Evaluation Unit") and that a simple description of the content be provided at the top of the centre column, with most finding the italicized quote difficult to read.  |

# Site Features [1]



Once respondents reviewed the top links on the left menu bar, they were asked to provide their expectations and impressions of the various site features listed below (see left image). Results of this discussion are detailed on the following pages.



# Site Features [2]

## *IDRC in the World*

- Reactions to this feature were very positive and respondents tended to notice it and express interest in it without being probed. It was clear to most respondents that this was an interactive feature that users could click on to narrow down their information search to a specific region. Expectations regarding content provided by this feature were generally met, i.e. locations of IDRC offices worldwide and research conducted in specific regions. A few respondents suggested that directions should be included to make it clear that one can click on a specific region of interest, e.g. "Click on Region of Interest".
- The interactive map found in the "Projects in LAC" section of this feature was shown to about half of the respondents. Respondents liked the interactive map itself, but they especially liked the information that was provided when they clicked on a country. This information was said to be useful and helpful, e.g. for writing a proposal, for an idea of the kind of funding available, to get the name of a contact for a project, etc. See next page for a visual example.

# Site Features [3]

Respondents liked this interactive map and the content that is accessed.

The screenshot displays the IDRC (International Development Research Centre) website. The header includes the IDRC logo, the text 'The International Development Research Centre Science for Humanity', and the Canadian flag. A navigation bar shows the path: HOME > About IDRC > IDRC in the Regions > Latin America > Projects in LAC. The main content area is titled 'Projects in the Region' and features a large orange map of Latin America and the Caribbean. To the left of the map is a 'Topic Explorer' menu with links to various resources. Below the map, there are links to specific project activities in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Ecuador. A text box on the left points to the map, indicating that respondents liked this interactive map and the content it accessed.

**Topic Explorer**

- Latin America...
- » Funding & Awards@
- » Awards, Grants in LAC
- » What's new in LAC region?
- » Conferences in LAC
- » Publications/ Databases
- » Press clippings
- » Projects in LAC
  - » Argentina
  - » Chile
  - » Colombia
  - » Ecuador
  - » Honduras
  - » México
  - » Uruguay
  - » Contact Us

**Participate**

**Editor(s)**

Andrea Puppo

ID: 22434  
Added: 2002-11-13 14:28  
Modified: 2005-03-16 15:50

**Country Highlights – Latin America and the Caribbean**

- [Actividades del IDRC en Argentina](#)
- [Actividades del IDRC en Chile](#)
- [Actividades del IDRC en Colombia](#)
- [Actividades del IDRC en Ecuador](#)

# Site Features [4]

## *In\_Focus Dossiers*

- This feature was the least clear to respondents. Some respondents were not familiar with the term “dossiers” and even those who were, they were not sure what to expect.
- Once respondents looked at the feature in more detail, it was still not instantly clear what the purpose and scope of the section was. Upon further inspection, most respondents liked the feature and thought that it was useful, but they agreed that a label change was necessary. Most respondents were not able to suggest an appropriate label for the feature, but several did think that the term “issue” seemed appropriate and should be incorporated as part of the label. A few respondents suggested “Thematic Dossiers” or “IDRC Thematic Dossiers” for the feature.

## *Online Books*

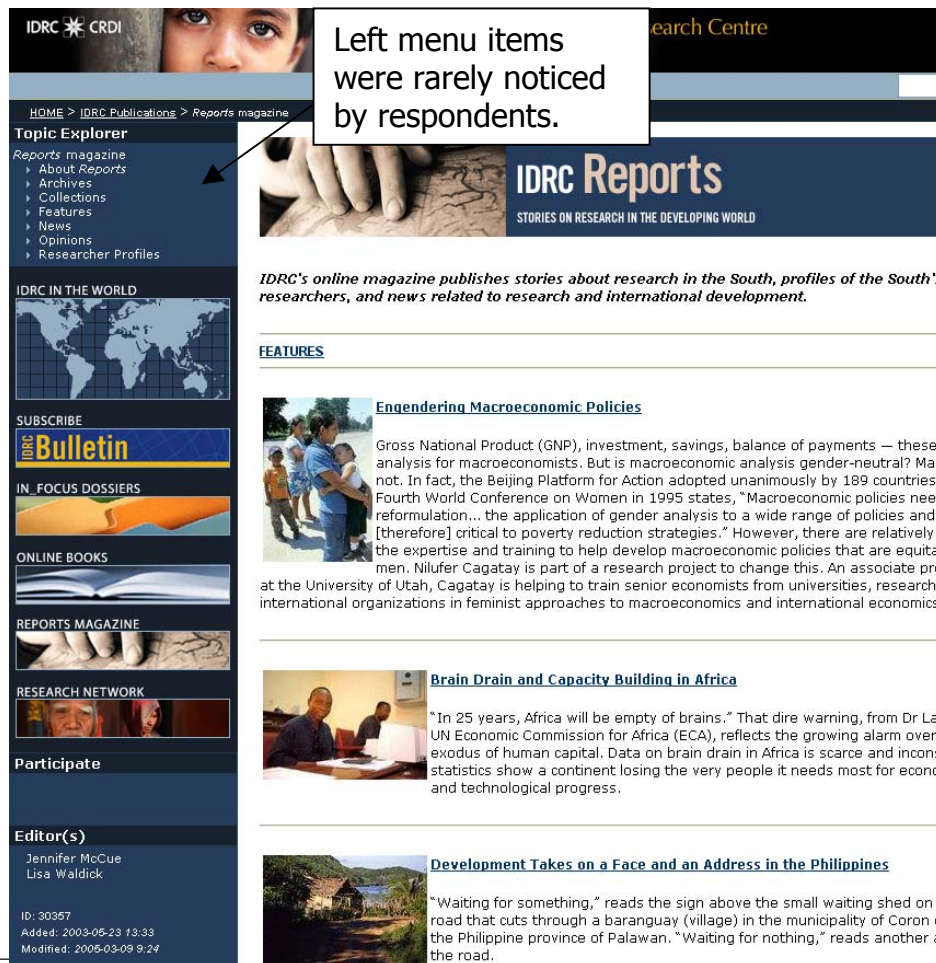
- This feature was generally clear to respondents, most of whom expected to be able to access and/or order IDRC published books online. Some respondents were not clear if the feature would include only IDRC publications or also subject-related books endorsed in some way by IDRC.
- Some of the respondents were pleasantly surprised that this feature offered online access to the complete text of publications.



# Site Features [5]

## Reports Magazine

- Many respondents did not have clear expectations for this feature and found the label confusing. A few had no clear idea of what to expect while others expected it to be a magazine featuring IDCR reports about programs, funding and rewards.
- When exploring the feature in more detail, respondents commonly focused on the centre column and were confused by the content featured (e.g. seeing only three items featured in the centre).
- Some eventually did notice the left menu bar or had it pointed out to them by the interviewer. They were then more receptive. This suggests a change in the organization of the content and perhaps a label/feature name may be needed.



Left menu items were rarely noticed by respondents.

**IDRC Reports**  
STORIES ON RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

*IDRC's online magazine publishes stories about research in the South, profiles of the South's researchers, and news related to research and international development.*

**FEATURES**

**Engendering Macroeconomic Policies**

Gross National Product (GNP), investment, savings, balance of payments — these are the staples of macroeconomic analysis. But is macroeconomic analysis gender-neutral? Many would say not. In fact, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted unanimously by 189 countries at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 states, "Macroeconomic policies need reformulation... the application of gender analysis to a wide range of policies and programs [therefore] critical to poverty reduction strategies." However, there are relatively few experts in the expertise and training to help develop macroeconomic policies that are equitable for women. Nilufer Cagatay is part of a research project to change this. An associate professor at the University of Utah, Cagatay is helping to train senior economists from universities, research institutions, and international organizations in feminist approaches to macroeconomics and international economics.

**Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa**

"In 25 years, Africa will be empty of brains." That dire warning, from Dr. Lall of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), reflects the growing alarm over the exodus of human capital. Data on brain drain in Africa is scarce and inconsistent. Statistics show a continent losing the very people it needs most for economic and technological progress.

**Development Takes on a Face and an Address in the Philippines**

"Waiting for something," reads the sign above the small waiting shed on the road that cuts through a barangay (village) in the municipality of Coron in the Philippine province of Palawan. "Waiting for nothing," reads another sign on the road.

# Site Features [6]

Respondents tended to focus on the centre and were confused to find only three features listed. Once the left menu links were acknowledged, respondents were more receptive to the feature.

The screenshot shows the IDRC website interface. On the left is a vertical navigation menu with the following links: HOME, IDRC Publications, Reports magazine, Topic Explorer, IDRC IN THE WORLD, SUBSCRIBE, IN FOCUS DOSSIERS, ONLINE BOOKS, REPORTS MAGAZINE, RESEARCH NETWORK, Participate, Editor(s), and a footer section with guest login and copyright information. The main content area on the right features a header for 'IDRC Reports' with the tagline 'STORIES ON RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD'. Below this is a paragraph about the magazine's focus. A 'FEATURES' section follows, containing three articles: 'Deriving Macroeconomic Policies', 'Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa', and 'Development Takes on a Face and an Address in the Philippines'. Each article has a small image and a brief text excerpt. Arrows from the text box on the left point to the 'Reports magazine' link in the menu, the 'Deriving Macroeconomic Policies' article, the 'Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa' article, and the 'Development Takes on a Face and an Address in the Philippines' article.

**Topic Explorer**  
Reports magazine  
About Reports  
Archives  
Collections  
Features  
News  
Opinions  
Researcher Profiles

**IDRC IN THE WORLD**

**SUBSCRIBE**  
The Bulletin

**IN FOCUS DOSSIERS**

**ONLINE BOOKS**

**REPORTS MAGAZINE**

**RESEARCH NETWORK**

**Participate**

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Modified: 2005-03-09 9:24

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**IDRC Reports**  
STORIES ON RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

IDRC's online magazine publishes stories about research in the South, profiles of the South's innovative researchers, and news related to research and international development.

**FEATURES**

**Deriving Macroeconomic Policies**

Gross National Product (GNP), investment, savings, balance of payments — these are the categories of analysis for macroeconomists. But is macroeconomic analysis gender-neutral? Many economists think not. In fact, the Beijing Platform for Action adopted unanimously by 189 countries at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 states, "Macroeconomic policies need rethinking and reformulation... the application of gender analysis to a wide range of policies and programmes is [therefore] critical to poverty reduction strategies." However, there are relatively few economists with the expertise and training to help develop macroeconomic policies that are equitable for women and men. Nilufer Cagatay is part of a research project to change this. An associate professor of economics at the University of Utah, Cagatay is helping to train senior economists from universities, research institutions, and international organizations in feminist approaches to macroeconomics and international economics.

**Brain Drain and Capacity Building in Africa**

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**Development Takes on a Face and an Address in the Philippines**

"Waiting for something," reads the sign above the small waiting shed on the side of the dusty road that cuts through a barangay (village) in the municipality of Coron on Busuanga Island, in the Philippine province of Palawan. "Waiting for nothing," reads another a kilometre or so down the road.

These two signs may well describe the feelings of many Palawanos, indeed of many Filipinos. Optimism, because of the national government's commitment since the late 1980s to reduce poverty. Pessimism because, as Celia Reyes of the Angelo King Institute for Economic and Business Studies (AKI) at De La Salle University says, "the performance of the Philippines with respect to poverty reduction has been very modest. While the incidence of poverty has declined over the past 15 years, the number of poor has actually increased."

# Site Features [7]

## *Research Network*

- Respondents did not expect this feature to link to the same information as the “Research Programs” link in the top left menu bar. All respondents agreed that the “Research Programs” link was the most appropriate and intuitive approach for this content. Having access to the same content via two different approaches was considered redundant.
- The term “Network” in the label of this feature tended to result in respondents’ expecting access to IDRC’s networks of people, names, contacts, and organizations working together on specific projects. Respondents were surprised that this feature did not contain this type of content and most thought that the IDRC site should have a section dedicated to this.
- When exploring this feature further (e.g. visited several sub-pages), some respondents noted the list of projects listed by code on the left menu bar (e.g. Project by Region section). The numbers presented without text were confusing and not all respondents were sure what they meant. Even those who correctly guessed that they were project codes said that the list was useless since they did not know the codes of projects.



# Site Features [8]

This list of numbers was confusing and not all respondents understood that the numbers were project codes. All respondents found the numbers to be useless without text.

**IDRC CRDI** ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Español - Français

HOME > Research Programs > Environment > Biodiversity > Projects by Region > Africa

**Topic Explorer**

Biodiversity

- About the initiative
- Projects by Region
  - Africa**
    - 002757
    - 002980
    - 002982
    - 003355
    - 003404
    - 003685
    - 003955
    - 003995
    - 055041
    - 055066
    - 055133
    - 055305
    - 055405
    - 055499
    - 060042
    - 065118
    - 065290
    - 100163
    - 100314

**Editor(s)**

Erin O'Manique  
Daniel Buckles  
Wendy Manchur

ID: 4905  
Added: 2002-07-02 8:29  
Modified: 2005-03-17 10:48

## Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa and Middle East/North Africa

Sustainable Use of Biodiversity supports research in all regions of Africa.

Africa is rich in plant genetic resources, both in natural landscapes and farmers' fields. Genetic erosion, however, is threatening the diversity of African plant genetic resources, which further increases the threat to the agricultural sustainability and places the food security of African farmers at risk. Policy and legislation, civil strife, population pressures, environmental degradation, land clearing, overgrazing, reduced fallow, over-exploitation, changing agricultural systems, and the replacement of local varieties are the main causes of plant genetic erosion in Africa. At the same time, the degree of genetic erosion varies from crop to crop, and country to country. Each situation requires appropriate conservation strategies.

Through SUB, IDRC supports research on new approaches to increasing food-production while protecting agricultural biodiversity.

(Zimbabwe), Phase II

- Collaboration Research Network on Conservation and Utilization of the African Tilapias
- Agrobiodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (Malawi)
- Traditional Eye Medicines in Malawi: Biodiversity and Utilization
- Conservation through Utilization of Banana and Plantain (East Africa)
- Medicinal Plants and Biodiversity (Uganda)
- Elanqata Wuas Ecosystem Management Program (Kenya), Phase II
- Plantes médicinales et communautés locales (Afrique)
- Medicinal Plants and Biodiversity (Uganda), Phase II
- Indigenous Food Plants (Uganda)

**Dossier Plantes médicinales**

2004-06-11  
Update on  
Importance  
économique et  
conservation des plantes  
médicinales au Sénégal  
(IUCN).

# Navigation [1]

## *Overall Site Navigation*

- Overall, issues related to navigation were the most apparent, but most of these issues seem to require relatively simple modifications for improvement (e.g. label changes).
- It was observed that the left menu bar, other than on the homepage, largely went unnoticed. Respondents most commonly focused on the centre column of the site and tended to only notice the left menu bar when they were confused and/or experienced difficulty finding information. This is an important issue considering that this is a key navigation tool provided on the site. This was most clearly demonstrated during the review of the "Reports Magazine" feature. Even when they clicked into the feature and scrolled through the page, respondents were still not clear what the section was all about because they did not notice the left menu.

# Navigation [2]

## *Overall Site Navigation (cont'd)*

- The presentation of the left menu bar was confusing to some respondents. These respondents felt that there was a lack of consistency between the top links (e.g. "About IDRC", "Research Programs", etc.) and the site features listed with graphics that followed (e.g. "IDRC Bulletin", "In\_Focus Dossiers", etc.). A need for consistency or a clearer distinction between the two types of links presented was suggested by these respondents.
- Throughout the site review, the right column tended to go unnoticed and when it was noticed, respondents were not clear why the content was there or how it was picked to be there in the first place.

# Navigation [3]

## *Issues with Labels and Content Placement*

- Confusion with some of the labels and placement of some content resulted in a few poor results from the information retrieval exercises. Examples include the following:
  - For respondents asked to find the “Expert Directory”, it was not intuitive that this would be found in the “Press Room” link on the left menu bar of the homepage. Respondents tasked with this exercise usually expected to access the “Expert Directory” from the “About IDRC” link or “Research Network” (see “Site Features” section related to expectations of “Research Network”).
  - The difference in terms of content between “Publications” and “Library” in the top left menu bar were not clear to respondents.
  - The “Evaluation” link in the top left menu bar was not clear to most respondents, most of whom mentioned that a label change was necessary, e.g. “Evaluation Unit” as well as a clearer explanation of the purpose of the section on the top centre of the section’s page.
  - Site features listed below the main links in the left menu bar, specifically “In\_Focus Dossiers”, “Reports Magazine” and “Research Network” were not clear to all respondents. Most respondents mentioned that a label change and further clarification within some of the features was necessary (see “Site Features” section for more detail).

# Navigation [4]

## *Reactions to Navigation Aids*

- Navigation aids such as the bread crumb feature and the clickable banner to return users to the homepage largely went unnoticed.
- Only two respondents used the **bread crumbs** while navigating on the site. One noted that they weren't particularly aware of the full feature, but used the "Home" link in the feature to return to the homepage during the interview. In general, respondents did not notice or use the bread crumbs and were not clear on their function even once it was pointed out by the interviewer. Several respondents suggested that this feature be made more noticeable using larger and bolder font and making it clearer that these are links to help with site navigation.
- The **banner** at the very top of the IDRC site did not look clickable to respondents, with none expecting to click on it and return to the homepage. Even when moving their mouse in the banner area during exploration of the site, respondents did not notice that the mouse cursor changed to a hand, indicating that it is clickable. Some were probed, while others first suggested that a clear "Home" button be provided at the top left of the site, either in or just directly below the banner.



# Navigation [5]

The bread crumb feature went unnoticed. Several respondents suggested that it be made more noticeable using larger and bolder font.

The banner did not look clickable and respondents did not expect to click on it and return to the homepage. According to respondents, a "Home" button should be added.

The screenshot shows the IDRC (International Development Research Centre) website. The header includes the IDRC logo, the text "The International Development Research Centre Science for Humanity", and a "Canada" logo. A search bar is located on the right. The breadcrumb trail "HOME > About IDRC > Career Opportunities" is visible. The main content area is titled "Career Opportunities" and contains information about job openings, contact details (by mail, by email, or by fax), and a statement of commitment to employment equity. The sidebar on the left includes links to "Topic Explorer", "IDRC IN THE WORLD", "SUBSCRIBE IDRC Bulletin", "IN FOCUS DOSSIERS", "ONLINE BOOKS", "REPORTS MAGAZINE", and "RESEARCH NETWORK". The right sidebar contains links to "IDRC's Employment Philosophy" and "Salary Scale".

HOME > About IDRC > Career Opportunities

**Topic Explorer**  
Career Opportunities

**IDRC IN THE WORLD**

**SUBSCRIBE**  
**IDRC Bulletin**

**IN FOCUS DOSSIERS**

**ONLINE BOOKS**

**REPORTS MAGAZINE**

**RESEARCH NETWORK**

**Career Opportunities**

Job openings are updated regularly on this page (see listings below). Interested applicants should send their resumes (be sure to quote the job number):

**by mail:**

Human Resources  
IDRC  
PO Box 8500  
Ottawa, ON, Canada  
K1G 3H9

**by email:** [competitions@idrc.ca](mailto:competitions@idrc.ca)

**or by fax:** (613) 238-7230

*We thank all applicants for their interest. We will contact only those candidates whose skills and experience best match the requirements of the position.*

IDRC IS COMMITTED TO EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND ENCOURAGES APPLICATIONS FROM QUALIFIED WOMEN, MEN, VISIBLE MINORITIES, ABORIGINAL PEOPLES, AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**IDRC's Employment Philosophy**  
What it means to work at IDRC.

**Salary Scale**

# Navigation [6]

## *Reactions to Navigation Aids (cont'd)*

- The **search function** was very well received and proved to be effective during the information retrieval exercises. If the information could not be found elsewhere and/or there didn't seem to be an intuitive link on the homepage, several respondents were able to successfully find the information using the search function. Most respondents liked that users were provided with options to select from to specify their search further. Some were not clear of all of the options given, especially the bottom four (Environment, Information Technologies, Socioeconomic, Evaluation). In addition, a few respondents had to retype the keyword in the search function when they selected an option from the results page.
- Several respondents were asked their impressions about the site not having a **site map**. Most indicated that they do not usually use a site map and that they would likely not use one if it were provided on the IDRC site. These respondents were given a hard copy sample of a proposed site map. For most, this did not seem useful.

# Navigation [7]

Respondents did not like that they had to retype their keyword(s) after selecting an option. For example, this illustrates the results page for "biodiversity". If a user wanted to refine their search by selecting one of the options, they would be required to retype their keyword.

Although respondents liked that there were options to refine their search, not all of the options were clear to them.

The screenshot shows the IDRC (International Development Research Centre) website search results for the keyword "biodiversity". The page header includes the IDRC logo, the text "The International Development Research Centre Science for Humanity", and the Canadian flag. The search bar shows "biodiversity" and the results are "Results 1 - 6 of about 5420. Search took 0.17 seconds."

The left sidebar contains a "Search" section with a list of categories: www.idrc.ca, Reports Magazine, Booktique, Environment, Information Technologies, Socioeconomic, and Evaluation. The main content area displays six search results, each with a title, a brief description, and a link to the full document. The results are:

- [Agricultural biodiversity. International Development Research ...](#)  
Agricultural **biodiversity**. Agricultural **biodiversity** is important for two fundamental reasons. ... Document(s), Agricultural **Biodiversity** Research at IDRC. ...  
[web.idrc.ca/en/ev-4901-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 39k - 2005-03-16
- [Sustainable Use of Biodiversity](#)  
... Sustainable Use of **Biodiversity** (SUB), ... **Biodiversity**, or genetic variability, is vital to the health of the planet and its people. ...  
[web.idrc.ca/en/ev-1248-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 22k - 2005-03-14  
[ [More results from web.idrc.ca/en](#) ]
- [Agricultural biodiversity. International Development Research ...](#)  
Agricultural **biodiversity**. Agricultural **biodiversity** is important for two fundamental reasons. First, a wide range of distinct types ...  
[web.idrc.ca/es/ev-4901-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 39k - 2005-03-16
- [Sustainable Use of Biodiversity](#)  
... Sustainable Use of **Biodiversity** (SUB), ... **Biodiversity**, or genetic variability, is vital to the health of the planet and its people. ...  
[web.idrc.ca/es/ev-1248-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 19k  
[ [More results from web.idrc.ca/es](#) ]
- [Agricultural biodiversity. nom du portail](#)  
Agricultural **biodiversity**. Agricultural **biodiversity** is important for two fundamental reasons. First, a wide range of distinct types ...  
[web.idrc.ca/fr/ev-4901-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 39k - 2005-03-14
- [Community Biodiversity Development Conservation Programme, Phase ...](#)  
Community **Biodiversity** Development Conservation Programme, Phase II, ... Community **Biodiversity** Development and Conservation Program. document, ...  
[web.idrc.ca/fr/ev-4936-201-1-DO\\_TOPIC.html](#) - 31k - 2005-03-13  
[ [More results from web.idrc.ca/fr](#) ]

At the bottom of the results, a note states: "In order to show you the most relevant results, we have omitted some entries very similar to the 6 already displayed. If you like, you can [repeat the search with the omitted results included](#)."

The footer includes a "Login" link, "Important Notices | Copyright 1995 - 2003 © International Development Research Centre", and the Canadian flag.

# Priority Improvement Suggested by Respondents

Respondents suggested the following improvements for the IDRC site:

- Change the content of "Research Network" feature to information aligned with users expectations, e.g. IDRC's network of organizations and contacts, etc.
- Clarify or integrate certain labels (e.g. "Library" versus "Publications", "In\_Focus Dossiers", "Reports Magazine", "Evaluation").
- Add headings to the main sections on the homepage (e.g. "Mandate", "Current Events").
- Highlight the mandate on the homepage using a heading and different font (e.g. bolder and different from other text).
- Ensure the search keyword remains when refining the search.
- Add a "Home" link button on or below the Banner.
- Use headings on the right hand side column to clarify the seemingly random topics featured in this section.
- Increase the use of wasted space at the bottom of the pages, especially the bottom left and right of the homepage.
- Improve the quality and balance of images used on the site, especially the homepage.

## III. Moving Forward

This section presents recommendations based on the key findings of the research.

# Moving Forward

## Look and Feel

- Use headings to clarify sections on the homepage. Simple, bold headings such as “IDRC Mandate” and “Current Features” in the centre section would quickly tell visitors what they are looking at with little effort.
- Decrease the amount of text on the site, especially the homepage so that visitors do not feel overwhelmed when starting their search. This can be accomplished by simply removing some of the text from each feature in the centre and right columns, ideally limiting the text to one sentence or 2-4 lines, followed by the arrow link for more information.
- Improve the quality and balance of images on the site, especially the homepage. The homepage sets the tone for the site, thus all images used must be clear and relevant.
- Display the mandate on the homepage in a more predominant manner, using a bold heading and different size of font from the text in the following sections.



# Moving Forward

## Content

- Continue to keep features on the homepage up-to-date and interesting for visitors. The latter can be accomplished by using high-quality, eye-catching images that are clearly relevant to the feature as well as brief descriptions or “teasers” for each feature.
- Consider keeping the “Research Network” link, but changing the content to include information aligned to users expectations, such as IDRC’s network of people, names, contacts and organizations, etc.
- Include brief descriptions of purpose and scope of content provided in certain sections, especially the “Evaluation” and “Reports Magazine” so that visitors can decipher the content with ease.
- Move the “Expert Directory”, currently accessed from “Pressroom” link on the homepage to a more intuitive section of the site. The “About IDRC” section may prove to be most effective, since this seemed most intuitive to respondents.

# Moving Forward

## Labels

- Change some labels to clarify content expectations for visitors, thus improving overall site navigation. Specifically, the labels to change are outlined below.
  - Modify the “Publications” and/or “Library” labels to clearly distinguish these two links. Suggestions: “IDRC Publications”, “IDRC Searchable Library”
  - Change the “In\_Focus Dossiers” label to something using the term “issues”, such as “IDRC Featured Issues” or “Key Issues”.
  - The “Evaluation” label should be changed to “The Evaluation Unit”.
  - Add “Click on a region of interest” to the “IDRC in the World” feature to make it clear that clicking on the map will provide them with information related to a specific region in the world.



# Moving Forward

## Navigation [1]

- Consider modifying the site structure by removing the right column of the site. Removing the text and images from the right will help the site seem less overwhelming and allow for more space for the centre column content. This would allow for more space to increase the font size and presentation of the left menu bar, which is currently going unnoticed on many pages of the site. Without the right column, it is not believed that navigation and access to content will be diminished since respondents tended to ignore and/or not understand the purpose of it.
- Limit the confusion between the top bulleted and bottom graphical series of links ("Online Books", "Reports Magazine", "Dossiers"). This could be achieved in one of two ways.
  1. Create one standardized approach to displaying all of the links on the left using noticeable bulleted links instead of large graphics.
  2. Consider adding a "Quick links' Menu" on the homepage that will provide easy access to the graphical links. This type of menu would help feature and promote these items without displaying them in a manner that is too distracting to users.

# Moving Forward

## Navigation [2]

- Consider adding a “Quick link menu” on the homepage that will provide easy access to the current site features, such as “Online Books” and “Reports Magazine”. This menu, following the top left menu links, would help feature and promote these items without displaying them in a manner that is too distracting to users.
- Improve the bread crumb feature so that it is more noticeable to visitors and that its function is easily understood. Increasing the font size and changing the font colour should prove to be effective.
- Add a “Home” button to the banner at the far left. Ensure that the font is bold and large enough to be noticed and that it is underlined to denote that it is a clickable link.
- Although the search function proved to be an effective tool, consider developing it further by enhancing the search options or perhaps adding a link directly on the homepage (e.g. “Advanced Search”), allowing respondents to immediately perform a refined search.